7: Shklovsky -- 56-57 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 524, 533, 831

"[RCH: after a wedding attended by the author] Besides improvisations, they sang the customary songs, some of which expressed unbridled licentiousness and sensuality, the utmost plainness of language [57] being employed. Others, on the contrary, were delicate and sad."

"'Friends, let us play at guessing riddles ' suggested an old woman.
'Riddle-me-riddle-me-ree. From the roof hang four moccasins.'
The answer was: 'The four teats of a cow.'
Riddle-me-riddle-me-ree. Every morning the daughter of the Tsar Syrad Omuk comes out to work spells.'
The answer to this was 'Dawn.'
Some of the riddles were quite Yakutian in character.
'Riddle-me-riddle-me-ree. He was born in a hut where he lay quiet and still, but when he arose there came a blizzard.'
'We know, we know!' cried many voices. 'It is Sata.' (1)

1. The stone of Yakutian mythology. It is believed to be inside an eagle, or in the kidney of a black bull with a white patch on his forehead. This stone, when laid on the palm of the hand, causes a storm; and when cast into the water it turns round and round and them becomes still.

To please me, they began to ask riddles in praise of Russians.
'They say that My Lord receives chips that have been cut in his country.'
Guess, if you can, that the answer is 'A letter!'

Sometimes, with Homeric simplicity, they asked the girls riddles, courage to answer which might only have been found in those bold story-tellers who compiled 'Les cent Nouvelles nouvelles' in the time of Louis XI, supposing, of course, that they had understood Yakutsk! "

16: Great Britain Admiralty --165 [3] G-3 (no date) 1920 Yakut
116, 153, 513, 524

"They are passionately fond of cards; when giving their horses rest on their journeys, they instantly produce their cards, and are ready to stake anything. They are great eaters and drinkers, great smokers of tobacco, and extraordinarily fond of sleep. They are probably the most intelligent of the Siberian native tribes, though the Buryats are better educated."

17: Erman--330-331 N-3 (1828-29) 1850 Yakut
116, 306, 171, 177, 524

"When the work was finished, the girls began to employ themselves in the yurt with the business of decoration. In an elaborately made box of birch-bark they had treasured up some studs of brass and lead, beads, and old brass springs. These last were cut into small pieces, and strung with the studs and beads so ingeniously, that a very pretty ornament for the head was made with very poor materials. The Yakut had lent the girl his assistance in making this band, at her earnest request. I was more surprised at another of their amusements, respecting which, however, I subsequently learned, that it is much in vogue with all the Yakuts and Tunguzes. (1) A pack of cards, so much

1. The Tunguzes, in the circle of Koluimsk, are passionately fond of chess. They carve the chessmen very elaborately out of mammoth's teeth. These northern nomades probably received their acquaintance with this game, and taste for others, from China at a very early period.

worn out as to be hardly recognisable, was brought to light from a corner of the yurt. They played, two at a time, in turns, with-[331] out any stake, but very eagerly. The Russian names of the cards are those used here."

39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

Neither in the engraving and carving on the wooden kumiss vessels, nor in the embroidery on the leather and birch-bark vessels, do we find any realistic representation of animals or objects. Realistic art was evidently not known to the Yakut in the past. SĀROSHEVSKI remarks that the old-time Yakut considered it a sin for any one except shamans to carve human figures from wood. The shamans carve these roughly of wood, which represent "guardians" or evil spirits, for use in religious ceremonies, and they are not regarded as harmless to ordinary folk. I saw figures of cows and horses carved from wood or birch-bark, to be used by children as playthings, but there were never any dolls among them. Some Yakut living not far from the Russian town of Yakutsk carve from ivory, among other things human figures; but I consider this to be a rather inartistic imitation of the carvings of neighboring tribes.

The only attempt at realistic reproduction in the ornamentation of kumiss vessels is to be found in the carving of horses' hoofs. Thus the feet of the three-legged goblets are often carved in the shape of horses' hoofs (Plate XXII, Fig. 2). The mouthpiece of the kumiss churning-vessel likewise often has the form of a horse's hoof. Even in a conventionalized form we do not find the representation of an animal or human figure, not even that of the horse, which forms an object of their animal cult; but, judging from the Yakut names, we do meet with conventionalized representations of parts of the human body.

Thus No. 13 (Fig. 8) is called *tonohos oyū*, that is, "vertebral ornament," and represents the spine or neck vertebra.

No. 15 is called *tyūyrax oyū*, which means "nail-ornament," and represents human nails.

No. 16 is called *tarbax oyū*, which is "finger-ornament," and is a conventionalization of the human finger. On birch-bark vessels we find the same ornament embroidered in horsehair (Plate XXII, Fig. 4), and it is then called *tarbaxtȳ ṭigī*, which means "finger-embroidery."

49: Findeisen --12 E-1 (no date) 1930 Yakut
116, 524, 857

[RCH: When they are older] They are wanted for little work purposes, but have still time for playing, an occupation which they attend with special enthusiasm in the summer time. On fields or glades they play the flock play, perform hunting parties, festivals, or weddings, or invite guests to be treated with berries, roots, or whatever they may find. They dance, imitate the shamans, wrestle, catch fish, lay snares for birds, persecute the little striped squirrels. They also play a game called 'falcon and duck,' the only play with group formation and systematic rules, that has been discovered with them. The rules are as follows; two sticks about ten meters long are laid on a plain and suitable place of a glade, at a distance of four or five meters; these sticks represent the 'banks.' Behind the sticks there is 'water,' and between them, the 'path.' Near the center of one stick a large boy is placed who is supposed to be the 'falcon.' The other children try to get past the falcon marching along the path like ducks. He who is caught by the falcon is considered as 'dead' and has to leave the game; so has he who has entered the 'water' while trying to escape the falcon. The falcon is allowed to persecute the 'ducks' far beyond the boundaries of the 'path.'

the Yakut system of kinship is close to the systems used by a number of Turkic peoples. 609

The position of women both in the family and in public life was inferior. The husband, the head of the family, enjoyed despotic power, and the wife could not even complain of harsh treatment, which was a fairly common occurrence, if not at the hands of the husband, then at the hands of his relatives. A woman from another tribe, defenseless and lacking in all rights, was burdened with hard work when she became part of a new family. 562

The position of older people who were decrepit and no longer able to work was also difficult. Little care was shown for them, they were given little to eat and poorly clothed, sometimes even reduced to complete destitution. 888

The position of children, despite the fact that the Yakuts loved their children, as pointed out by many observers, was also rather unfortunate. The birth rate was very high among the Yakuts and most families produced from 5 to 10 children, sometimes as many as 20 or even more. However, the bad living conditions, poor food and inattention resulted in very high child mortality. Apart from their own children, many families, particularly those in which there were few children, often adopted children, whom they often simply bought from the poorer people. 853 [163] [165] 597

Newborn babies were washed by the fire in the hearth and rubbed with cream. This operation was repeated fairly frequently later on. The mother breast-fed her child for some time, as long as 4 or 5 years, although in addition the child received a horn of cow's milk. The Yakut cradle was a long box made of thin, bent pieces of wood, in which the wrapped baby was placed, strapped in and left for some time, without being removed. The cradle had a groove to drain away the urine. Older children usually crawled about the earthen floor together with the animals, either half-naked or completely naked, and were left to themselves; sometimes they were attached to the table on a long strap to prevent them from falling into the fire. The children of the poorer people were trained to work from an early age, and had to carry out work according to their strength—such as collecting brush in the forest, looking after smaller livestock, and so on; the girls were trained in domestic duties. The children of the toyons received more attention, were mollycoddled and generally spoiled. 854 [853] 855 184

The children had few toys. These were usually wooden figures of animals, tiny bows and arrows, little houses and model utensils, made by the parents or sometimes by the children themselves; and the girls had dolls with model clothes, blankets, pillows and so on. The games of the Yakut children were simple and rather monotonous. The absence of noisy group games is characteristic; generally speaking, when the children of the poorer Yakuts grew up, they were quiet and sluggish. 524

Religion

Even in the second half of the 18th century, many of the Yakuts had been baptized, and in the 19th century all Yakuts were registered as Orthodox. Although the transition to Orthodoxy was motivated by and large by material considerations (various privileges and grants for those baptized), the new religion gradually became part of their everyday life. In the corner of their dwellings there hung icons; the people wore crucifixes (the large silver crucifix-type embellishments worn by the women are interesting), went to church and many of them, particularly 771

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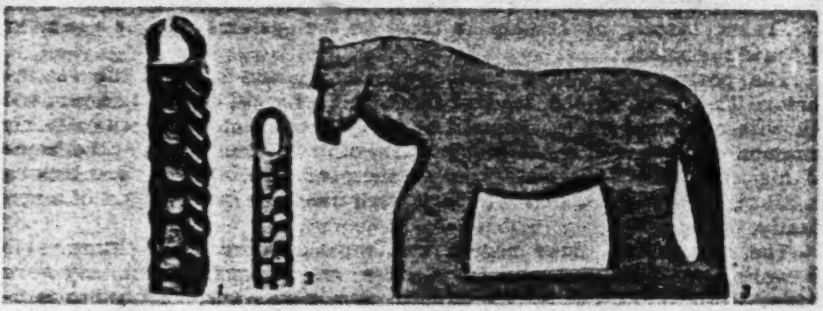

Wooden toys: 1—ox, 2—cow; 3—horse.

771 the toyons, were zealous Christians. Actually, this is understandable, since Christianity was far better suited than shamanism to satisfying the class interests of the rich people. Nevertheless, the old, pre-Christian religion did not entirely disappear, and the older beliefs, although somewhat modified through the influence of Christian ideas, still kept their hold; and the shamans, the ministers of the old cult, still enjoyed authority, although they were forced to some extent to conceal their activities from the tsarist administrators and Orthodox clergy. Shamanism and the animistic beliefs associated with it seem to have been the most persistent element of the old Yakut religion.

756 171 The Yakut shamanism was closest of all to the Tungus type. The Yakut shaman tambourine (wide-rimmed and oval) was exactly the same as the Tungus tambourine; the costume was also the Tungus type, except that the Yakut shamans officiated with uncovered heads. The similarity involved more than just their outward appearance; it also showed up in the more important details of the beliefs and rituals.

756 The Yakut shaman (oyuun) was considered the professional attendant of the spirits. According to Yakut belief, anyone chosen by the spirits to serve them could become a shaman, but the shamans were usually from the same families: "in a clan where a shaman has once appeared, he does not pass away," said the Yakuts. Apart from men shamans, there were also women shamans (*yöaŋan*), who were considered to be [753] even more powerful. A sign of readiness to adopt the profession of shaman was a nervous ailment, which was interpreted as evidence that the person had been "elected" by the spirits; this was followed by a period of training under the guidance of an old shaman, and finally by a ritual public consecration.

756 776 It was thought that the spirit electing the shaman became his patron spirit (emeget), and that it was the soul of an important shaman who had died earlier. Its image in the form of a flat copper effigy was worn among the other pendants with the shaman costume; the image was also called an emeget. The patron spirit imbues the shaman with strength and knowledge. The shaman sees and hears only through his emeget. Besides the latter, every shaman has his own animal double (iye-kyyl, "mother beast") in the form of an invisible eagle, stallion, bull, bear and so on. Finally, besides these personal spirits, every shaman was associated with a number of other spirits in human or bestial form when casting his spells. The different categories of spirits associated with the shaman's activity had their own specific names.

[753] The most important and largest group of spirits were the abaahy (or abaasy), devouring spirits to whose activity certain diseases were attributed.

glass, tambours (extra doors with an air lock in between) and zavalinkas (mounds of earth around the house). A common practice is to ice over the house for the winter with a mixture of snow and water. Double ceilings, double floors, horizontal flues and shutters are still used, although rather rarely. The brick or tile stove is sometimes combined with the traditional Yakut fireplace. In many houses there is an extra iron stove in addition to the brick stove.

The internal appearance of dwellings has also changed. The furniture known before to the Yakuts (tables, stools and benches) has become less massive and more varied. We now find bookshelves, chairs, small dressing-tables and mirrors. Factory-made crockery and utensils are encountered in every home. Clocks (including alarm clocks), writing materials, and books have become common, and phonographs are also sometimes found. In most houses the walls are adorned with posters, pictures of Communist Party leaders, photographs, bookshelves, and over the bed there is usually a rug made of skin from the reindeer's head, bead-embroidered saddlecloths, or else the walls are covered with cloth. The windows have curtains.

Tremendous changes have taken place in the way of life of the Yakuts. Many collective farms now have electricity and radio. Clean clothes, hot baths, and attention to their personal appearance are typical of most of the collective-farm members. There has been a change in interests, habits and way of life. The outlook of the population has broadened. Books can now be found in every house. In the settlements people enjoy movies, and attend lectures and discussions in the reading rooms. Young people take part in ski-races, chess and other sporting events. Amateur song and dance groups in the clubs are usually of interest to the whole settlement. The families are no longer isolated and no longer keep to themselves.

A typical innovation for city children is toys, such as figures of horses and cows, rubber dolls, rattles, clockwork trucks, and so on. In addition to these, we commonly find delicately carved wooden animals and tiny bows and arrows. In the schools and boarding facilities children amuse themselves with the most popular table games. In the spring and summer they play various games, including hide-and-seek and blind man's-buff.

A great deal has changed in the Yakut diet, as well.

It should be remembered that before the Revolution Yakutiya was a country of chronic famine. Most of the Yakut population suffered from starvation every year, particularly at the end of the winter and in spring. Bread has now become a normal food not only in the southern but also in the northern areas. Groats and macaroni are now part of the staple diet. The consumption of vegetables and potatoes has also considerably increased.

In many regions the collective farms grow cucumbers, radishes, cabbages, onions and beets. Vegetables are imported in the dehydrated form. Everywhere the population is amply provided with tea, sugar, and tobacco. There are bakeries at trading points in most settlements. Meat and fish are consumed by the Yakuts in large quantities, particularly in the northern regions, where they are the staple diet. In the southern regions an important part of the diet is dairy products. On account of the overall improvement in the living standards of the people, sapwood is no longer consumed as food. Nor do they eat pickled fish any more. Local traditions are still retained in the cooking of dairy products, meat and fish. In the northern regions meat is commonly undercooked. Milk is made into some curious dishes such as suorat, khayakh, chokhoon, кобуор and so forth. In a number of regions reindeer gristle is still eaten in the raw state as a delicacy, and so are the liver and bone marrow of this animal. Many families eat freshly